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Musings and reflections from first-year department chairs; an extension of the NCA

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Description of the session: This session grew from the 3 presenters' experience at the New Chair Alliance of the 2016 Academic Chairpersons Conference in Charleston, SC. Attend this session to hear them reflect on completing their first year of being a chair and address the good, bad, and ugly.

The presenters will highlight various issues (personnel, academic, leadership, etc.) using a case study approach and make direct connections to their experience in the previous NCA. In particular, examples of the *good* include the leading of an external program review based on the relatively novel utilization of faculty writing groups. Another example is the opportunity to not only start out as a new chair, but also starting a new department. An example of the *bad* related to the unforeseen amount of administrative hassle that warrants timely resolution (student petitions / appeals, graduation audits, campus requested reports, course scheduling, etc.) which often opposed the necessary time associated with being a productive faculty member. An example of the *ugly* centers on the new dynamic as it relates to faculty / colleague relationships and how that weaves into mentorship, evaluation, and merit-based pay.

More specifically, one case will focus on the delicate and often conflicting balance between the primary role of being a faculty member and the expected teaching, research, and service activities expected of you with ever increasing administrative functions and requests that are also expected of you. With the end goal for each role (faculty and administrator) being the same (serve students) it could be very easy for a new chair to fail at both. For one of the presenters, the solution to this conflict was to propose a re-casting of the administrative support structure of their home academic unit to better serve students and ensure academic success. One chair has also been faced with accreditation issues that offered unique challenges as well. Overall, they will share what they knew going into the role of chair, what they wished they knew, and, what they learned. Macro and micro issues will be addressed.

Each presenter comes from a unique (both campus and academic unit) environment that enables various perspectives to be shared and will allow them to offer differing views of the role of chair and how they move through this space of academic leadership.

Learning, from peers, how to address some early challenges in the chair's role will benefit other new chairs showing them ways to succeed in a variety of environments. There will be opportunity for questions, partner think-pair-share, and table talk.



Musings & Reflections from First-Year Department Chairs: An Extension of the NCA

Dr. Mark Urtel
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Dr. Sandra Jowers-Barber
University of the District of Columbia Community College

Dr. Stacey Smith
Fort Hays State University

Introduction/Background

- 2016 New Chair Alliance
- Networking
- Shared experiences



The Good!

- Program Review
- Accreditation
- 0 credit hour course development
- Gen Ed course approvals
- Course unification
- Minors / Certifications





The Bad!

- Audits / Reports
- Course scheduling
- Facility Coordination
- Some data collection

The Ugly!

- Complaints / conflicts among or between students, faculty, and staff
- The politics of it all
- Merit pay



The Good!

- Really wanting to be chair
 - My leadership style:
Servant Leadership or no leadership at all
 - Know the expertise you bring to the position
 - Improve the student experience
 - Remember, it is not “your” department



Dr. Sandra Jowers-Barber
University of the District of Columbia Community College



The Bad!

- Taking a long vacant chair
 - Dealing with faculty who wanted to be chair
 - Fostering unity and moving forward
 - Steering divided support for curriculum change
 - Accepting the fact that “the union says you are not one of us”

The Ugly!

- Leading during challenging times
 - Surviving public (unpleasant) leadership changes.
 - (Re)assuring and (re)engaging faculty who want to move forward.
 - Learning when and how to cut dead weight.
 - Understanding you are the chair for All of the faculty.



The Good!

- Character
 - Know thyself
 - Do not lead with an ego
 - Open communication
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Be kind and polite



**People of character
do the right thing
even if no one else does,
not because they think
it will change the world but
because they refuse
to be changed by the world.
- Michael Josephson**

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whatwillmatter.com

Dr. Stacey Smith
Fort Hays State University



The Bad!

- Processes
 - Develop strategic plan
 - Communication strategy
 - Use scheduling to reward when budgets limited
 - Meetings
 - Accreditation

Dr. Stacey Smith
Fort Hays State University

The Ugly!

- Culture
 - College culture seeping into department
 - Conversations
 - Team building
 - Focus on micro culture
 - Sharing information
 - Engaging critics in non-threatening ways
 - Opportunity! New department, new beginnings



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Presenter Information	Issues / Topics	Proposed Resolution / Solution	Result / Consequence
Mark Urtel , Department of Kinesiology at IUPUI; Chair since 2015 ; Teaching Load : 4 courses AY Support : currently .5 FTE admin. asst.* Department : 3 majors, ~ 620 students & 21 full-time faculty. University : 18 schools, ~30,000 students; situated in the heart of Indianapolis.	[A] <u>Impacting</u> curriculum, navigating program review/accreditations, shape the faculty;	[A] Working groups, Writing teams, & delegate! Incentivize (creatively) where you can.	[A] New minors/certificates approved, GenEd inclusion, successful assessments of programs, let faculty shine;
	[B] <u>Leading from the middle</u> : Steering the ship (mission) versus dotting the i's and crossing the t's (scheduling);	[B] Prioritize & manage time; Be transparent on 'why'; Communicate clearly & consistently; Re-cast expectations; Negotiate as needed.	[B] Mission / vision loses out to daily tasks and impromptu 'emergencies'; 100% accountability & little authority;
	[C] <u>Cannot do this job right</u> : student appeals, merit pay, etc.	[C] Re-cast expectations & reveal the "grey area" of decision making to colleagues / others; Be persistent;	[C] Skin thickens; Become adept at managing "failures" – daily;
Sandra Jowers-Barber , Humanities Division at the University of the District of Columbia Community College; Chair since 2015 ; Teaching Load : Varies from 1 Course AY or no courses. Support : No FTE; Division : 1 major; 1 program; 8 disciplines; 600+ students; 8 full-time faculty; and 40 adjunct faculty. College : Located in Washington, DC a mile from the Capitol	[A] <u>Taking the Chair after a Vacancy</u> : How to gain faculty trust; Motivating faculty who feel unappreciated	[A] Time needed to implement Division vision suffers; Time is devoted to crafting and implementing a strategy to foster faculty unity; Trying to identify issues of concern	[A] Have face to face meetings with faculty; LISTEN; Identify and go after some "fruit lowest on the tree" goals; Acknowledged and use faculty experience / expertise;
	[B] <u>Enacting a new Curriculum Co-Requisite</u> ; Directing major Division changes; Implementing controversial curriculum change	[B] Faculty must be assured that "this time" there will be change; -Time spent in meetings to gain faculty buy-in; Reviewing data colleges with successfully models	[B] Identify and work with the faculty willing to move forward; Provide opportunities to include all faculty; Establish weekly update meetings with Dean
	[C] <u>Listening</u> to Student Concerns; Acknowledge non-academic needs; Sharing the good/bad/ugly	[C] Work with administration to Lobby City Council and Board of Trustees; Empower Students to ask for themselves	[C] Make concerns known and Identify strategies for priorities; Reach for fruit lowest on tree
Stacey L. Smith , Department of Applied Business Studies , College of Business & Entrepreneurship; Interim Chair for 2015-16 ; Chair 2016-17 ; Teaching Load : 2 courses; Department : 3 programs, 350+ students; 10 full-time faculty; and 10 adjunct. University : Located in Hays, KS; western Kansas; halfway between Denver and Kansas City	[A] <u>Culture</u> : Leadership changes; New department; Striving to generate positive energy / hope amid skepticism & "we've always done it this way";	Conversations; Team building; Micro/Bridge/Macro culture building; Openly sharing information (budgets); Engaging critics in non-threatening ways; Express my own fears/hopes	Strategy suffers; Accreditation/direction struggles; Collegiality breakdown; Loss of hope; Fatalism; Unseen dynamics and relationships
	[B] <u>How to Make Character Helpful</u> : Qualities; Ethics; Behaviors	Start with "Know thyself"/make self-awareness a priority/do not lead with your ego; Open Communication; Think emotional Intelligence (Calm, avoid drama, non-impulsive, empathetic, adaptable); Be confident, respectful; Be kind and polite	Less trust/integrity; Less credibility; Less respect; Less opportunity to turn dilemmas into decisions
	[C] <u>How to Use Process Productively</u> Meetings; Scheduling; Staff development; Accreditation	Develop strategic plan; Develop communication strategy; Use scheduling to reward when budgets are limited	Poor communication; Ineffective implementation; Faculty tenure track struggles; No consensus/fractured environment/competing interests

